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SUBJECT: GOOGLE AND UNESCO BEGIN COLLABORATIVE ALLIANCE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On December 3, Google and UNESCO announced an alliance to provide virtual visits to nineteen World Heritage sites. While these initial sites are all in Western Europe, in 2010 Google intends to expand to sites in the United States, Australia, South Africa, Japan and other countries. Using Google's "Street View" interface, Internet users around the globe can access 360-degree views of some of the world's most important places and monuments. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Killion, DCM and PAO attended the press conference to demonstrate support for this private-public alliance between an American company and UNESCO. Prior to the press conference, Ambassador met with Google's communications director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa to signal the importance of this type of collaboration and to encourage the project - currently a content-licensing agreement - to develop into a full-fledged partnership. Google's mission to make information and content free and accessible to everyone directly aligns with UNESCO's mandate to provide access to information, to educate and to preserve.

¶3. (SBU) Also speaking with UNESCO representatives, Ambassador underscored the need to create greater visibility of UNESCO within the United States; a 20-year absence from the organization had meant that an entire generation was not aware of UNESCO nor its core, vital principles. Ambassador also stressed that during Director General Bokova's January trip to New York and Washington, she would need to deliver a simple, coherent message that would resound with American policymakers and the domestic public.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: While the Google representative spoke frankly about the inherent slowness in working with an international organization vis-a-vis the relative speed of the private sector, she was extremely positive about moving forward into greater partnership with the organization. (Note: Google is also digitizing the contents of the Iraqi National Museum in collaboration with the State Department, another project that could easily be linked with UNESCO. End note.) We should encourage these types of public-private partnerships at every opportunity, in order to enhance both UNESCO's capacity and its stature within the United States.
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